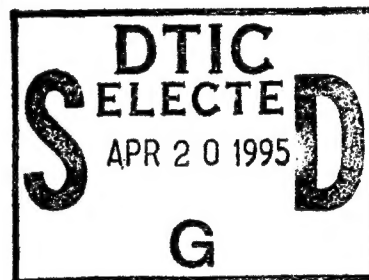
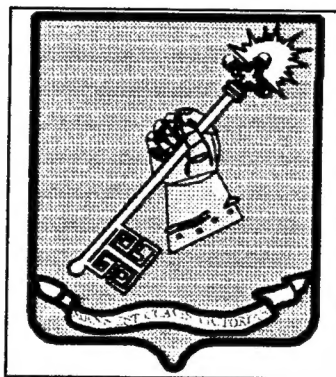


**MOVEMENT TO CONTACT:
LOSING THE FIGHT FROM THE START**

**A Monograph
by**

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Infantry**



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ABSTRACT

MOVEMENT TO CONTACT: LOSING THE FIGHT FROM THE START by
Major Charles W. Coxwell,, Jr., USA, 48 pages.

This monograph evaluates the soundness of U.S. movement to contact doctrine towards the offensive meeting battle. The author distinguishes two forms of meeting battle: offensive and defensive. The offensive meeting battle is a continuous struggle for the initiative. The author finds that in an offensive meeting battle, U.S. movement to contact doctrine concedes the initiative. U.S. movement to contact doctrine is passive, indecisive, and reactionary. The doctrine loses the fight from the start.

The doctrine is evaluated against the offense guidance presented in FM 100-5 to determine its level of congruency with capstone doctrine. Soviet doctrine is introduced to support the position presented in FM 100-5. The Soviets championed the offensive meeting battle. They preferred it to all other forms of combat.

Presently, military policy is requiring that a belligerent's offensive capability be neutralized without protracted war. Whereas the doctrine of the Cold War evolved to the doctrine of the offensive-defense, conditions today require the evolution of doctrine towards the defensive-offense. The offensive meeting battle is a means to this end.

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I. Introduction

The United States Army and NATO do not formally recognize the meeting battle as a distinct form of the tactical offense. They view it as a transitional operation between offense and defense. The Soviets, however, not only recognized its distinct form, they preferred it above all other forms of offensive operations. This study will examine both doctrines to determine the soundness of U.S. movement to contact doctrine towards the planning and conduct of the offensive meeting battle.

It is not the intent of this study to add to the litany of Cold War research concerning how to fight the Soviets. This study, rather than researching counters to Soviet doctrine, will attempt to embrace those aspects of Soviet doctrine that are congruent with FM 100-5. In the future, the offensive meeting battle may become the fundamental offensive operation for the neutralization of a threat nation's offensive capabilities, e.g. the destruction of the Iraqi Republican Guard by VII Corps.

The United States Army underwent a renaissance in fighting of the offensive-defensive -- airland battle. The requirement to fight the defensive-offensive -- strategic projection -- is logically the next challenge.

This study will initially explore and examine in Section II the nature and dynamics of the offensive meeting battle. Having established the nature of the offensive meeting battle, the doctrines of the United States Army/NATO and the Soviet Army are examined in Section III and IV. Section V analyzes both doctrines to determine the fundamental principles common to each. Using these principles, the offensive doctrine of FM 100-5 is compared with the current U.S. movement to contact doctrine to determine the latter's level of congruency. Soviet doctrinal writings are included to provide supporting evidence to the position presented in FM 100-5. The findings in this analysis provide the basis for the recommendations in Section VI.

II. The Offensive Meeting Battle

To understand the nature of the offensive meeting battle, it is important to familiarize oneself with the definition of the offensive meeting battle and its derivatives, the conditions supporting the offensive meeting battle, its characteristics, and its dynamics.

There are two types of meeting battles: offensive and defensive. An offensive meeting battle is battle fought between two or more approaching forces all of which seek their objectives through offensive action.¹ A defensive meeting battle is a battle fought between two or more approaching forces whereby one or more seek through defensive or retrograde maneuver to deny the enemy the accomplishment of its objectives.

An encounter is a sudden unexpected meeting of two adversaries.² Under U.S./NATO doctrine a meeting engagement is a unexpected action (encounter).³ Meeting engagements are small conflicts or skirmishes,

usually between opposing maneuver forces; they are normally short in duration and fought at division and below. Meeting battles, on the otherhand, occur when division, corps or army commanders fight for operationally significant objectives.⁴ They are deliberate combat actions. U.S./NATO doctrine does not address the concept of the meeting battle, only meeting engagements.

An advance or movement to contact is an offensive action to gain or regain contact with the enemy and to develop the situation.⁵ The advance/movement to contact is a deliberate action. Contact is the junction of two surfaces.⁶ Militarily contact may be defined as the physical junction of two forces within direct fire range of one or each other. Observation is not contact. Forces may be under observation through a number of sources -- optical, electronic, radar -- yet unable to physically affect each other.

The battlefield conditions that may result in offensive meeting battles are offensive actions during the initial period of war, counterthrusts (spoiling attacks), exploitation in depth of defensive sectors, pursuit, tactical movement from rear areas to forward areas, reinforcement of defensive sectors, and counterattacks.⁷

The NATO general defense plan (GDP) required U.S. forces to move to occupy forward positions from kaserne's located to the rear. Should the Soviets have gained surprise, meeting engagements were likely to occur behind the GDP line. Counterthrusts, more commonly known as spoiling attacks, are used to disrupt an attack.⁸ Counterthrusts require disproportionately smaller forces, avoids the defensive advantage of a stationary enemy force, and disproportionately affects the disruption of the enemy's attack, e.g. fire support schedule.

The exploitation of a success through offensive operations into to the depths of a defense will generally result in contacts with repositioning reserves and counterattacking forces. The Soviets did not believe that it was always necessary to revert to a defensive upon contact with attacking enemy forces behind the enemy defensive zone.⁹ The pursuit is similar to the exploitation, except that in the pursuit the pursuer runs the risk of overextension prior to contact. This situation occurred to U.N. forces along the Chongchon River in 1950.

The lateral movement of forces behind the defensive sector will result in meeting battles when an enemy penetration intersects the line of march. The movement of reinforcements to and the counterattack of threatened defensive sectors will result in meeting battles when the distance to the sector is great or when the route to the sector is effectively interdicted by the attacker. Both allow the enemy to exploit out of the confined defensive sector into the more maneuverable rear areas.

Finally, a defending unit can fight a meeting battle out of desperation, when the unit cannot defend the sector it is assigned or does not have the time to prepare a defense. An example of this situation occurred during the Arab-Israeli War 1973 when General Moshe Peled finding his defensive task infeasible decided to attack the Syrians along the Kuneitra Road in the Golan Heights.¹⁰

The offensive meeting battle is characterized as highly fluid, short in duration, maneuver dominant, force-oriented, and decisive.¹¹ Uncertainty prevails as both sides struggle for the initiative over unfamiliar terrain. Surprise often proves decisive. In an offensive meeting battle surprise is the objective of the battle and the destruction of the enemy force its aim.

The fluid nature of the battle results from the mechanization of modern forces and the speed with which they can maneuver. Restricted terrain or prepared enemy positions do not support the conditions for a meeting battle. The battles tend to be short in duration because

each side forgoes or does not possess an advantage in time for the preparation of terrain. The lack of protection from terrain increases substantially the rate of attrition. Foregoing the protection of terrain, advantage is sought through surprise, speed, and positional advantage -- maneuver. In the meeting battle possession of terrain has lesser significance than the destruction of the enemy as it is difficult to hold terrain that has not been prepared. It is important to note that although time is not available to prepare the terrain, the cover and concealment potential of the terrain is fully maximized. The higher attrition rate resulting from the increased exposure over unprepared terrain, maneuver, and the disorganizing cybernetic effects of meeting battles results in one sides general destruction.

During meeting battles uncertainty prevails.¹² Information on the enemy is highly unreliable due to the fluid nature of the situation. Moving at 20km per hour, an enemy force known to be at a given location can after just after three minutes be a kilometer away, and hence

no longer under observation. The battles are fought over unfamiliar ground, thereby presenting both sides with surprises incident to the terrain. Depending on the quality and date of the maps available, in light of the rapid development of many regions of the world, the potential for surprise incident to the ground can be substantial.

Surprise is rooted in uncertainty. Surprise is defined as striking the enemy at a time and place or in a manner for which he is unprepared.¹³ Surprise is the foremost principle of war affecting the meeting battle. To illustrate the effects of surprise imagine two fighters knife fighting in a dark room which neither has entered before -- a meeting battle. The effects of surprise occur when one of the fighters suddenly directs the beam of a flashlight directly into the face of his opponent. While blinding his opponent, the light of the flashlight also provides opportunity for the wielder to strike.

The dynamics of the offensive meeting battle are unique. Both sides decide to offensively maneuver foregoing the advantages of the defense -- the stronger form of war. The closing speed of the battle is faster than any other form of combat.¹⁴ Subsequently, the time to make decisions and prepare for battle is shorter than any other form of combat. The effects of terrain are symmetrical. The forces on both sides are extended in depth both in time and space.

Only in an offensive meeting battle do both sides struggle for the initiative through offensive action throughout the entire battle. Subsequently, the battles occur at a faster pace. If two forces approach each other at 20km per hour, their combined rate of closure is 40km per hour. If they are separated by 20 kilometers, they will make contact in under thirty minutes. Likewise, the time available for decision making is reduced.¹⁵

Given a zone of advance, each side generally possesses the same options of maneuver. Whichever avenue of approach one chooses to maneuver through, the opponent will tend to choose the same avenue of approach. Units on the march, due to the canalization of roads and the variable cross-country movement rates of terrain, march in extended columns. These columns act to extend the unit in time and space. In other words, the unit arrives sequentially and is unable to engage the enemy simultaneously. This inherent condition and the uncertainty of the situation impedes the massing and synchronization of combat power.

Having introduced the reader to the nature of the offensive meeting battle -- its definition, the conditions for occurrence, its characteristics, and its dynamics -- the reader can now apply these aspects to better measure the suitability of various doctrinal approaches towards the offensive meeting battle. For this study two doctrines will be presented: the U.S./NATO movement (advance) to contact and the Soviet meeting battle.

III. The U.S. Movement to Contact.¹⁶

The U.S. movement to contact is a transitional operation from offensive tactical movement to the attack or defense.¹⁷ This section will present the purpose, organization, and the methodology for the planning and conduct of U.S. movement to contact doctrine along with interpretations of NATO STANAG 2868.

The purpose for the movement to contact is to develop the situation and to establish or regain contact with the enemy.¹⁸ FM 71-100, Division Operations, qualifies that units make contact with the smallest part of the force while the remainder is available to immediately respond when contact is made.¹⁹ NATO Standardization Agreement (STANAG) 2868 reads that the advance to contact seeks contact with the enemy.²⁰

Unexpected contact with an enemy on which little information is known results in a meeting engagement.²¹ By its very definition, meeting engagements orient on securing friendly forces from enemy action, not

force-oriented action to preempt the enemy. The meeting engagement gains time and space through offensive action to allow the commander to validate his plan and adjust it to current battlefield situation. If all the contacts with the enemy are expected, known, or suspected or anticipated, a movement to contact smoothly transitions to a hasty or deliberate attack without a meeting engagement -- the approach march.²²

For a movement to contact, U.S. forces organize into three types of formations: the covering force, advanced guard, and the main body. (Figure 1 and 2)

The covering force is a tactically self-contained force, capable of independent action, which operates apart from the main body to develop the situation early and deceives, disorganizes, and destroys enemy forces.²³ The covering force is employed far enough forward of the main body to give the overall commander space and time in which to react to enemy contact.²⁴ The outcomes of the meeting engagements fought by the covering force determine the actions of the main body.²⁵ The covering

Figure 1 Movement to contact

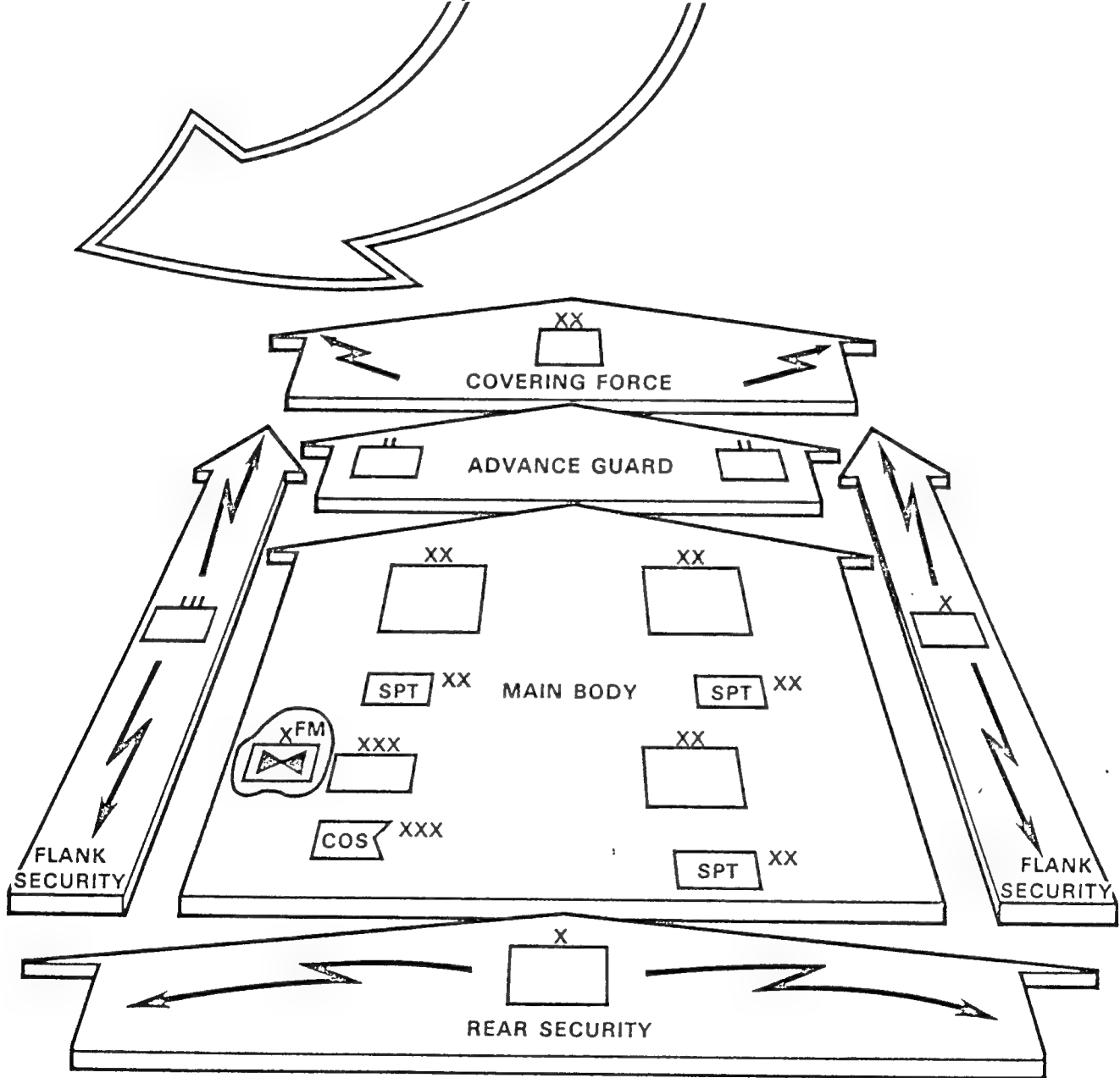
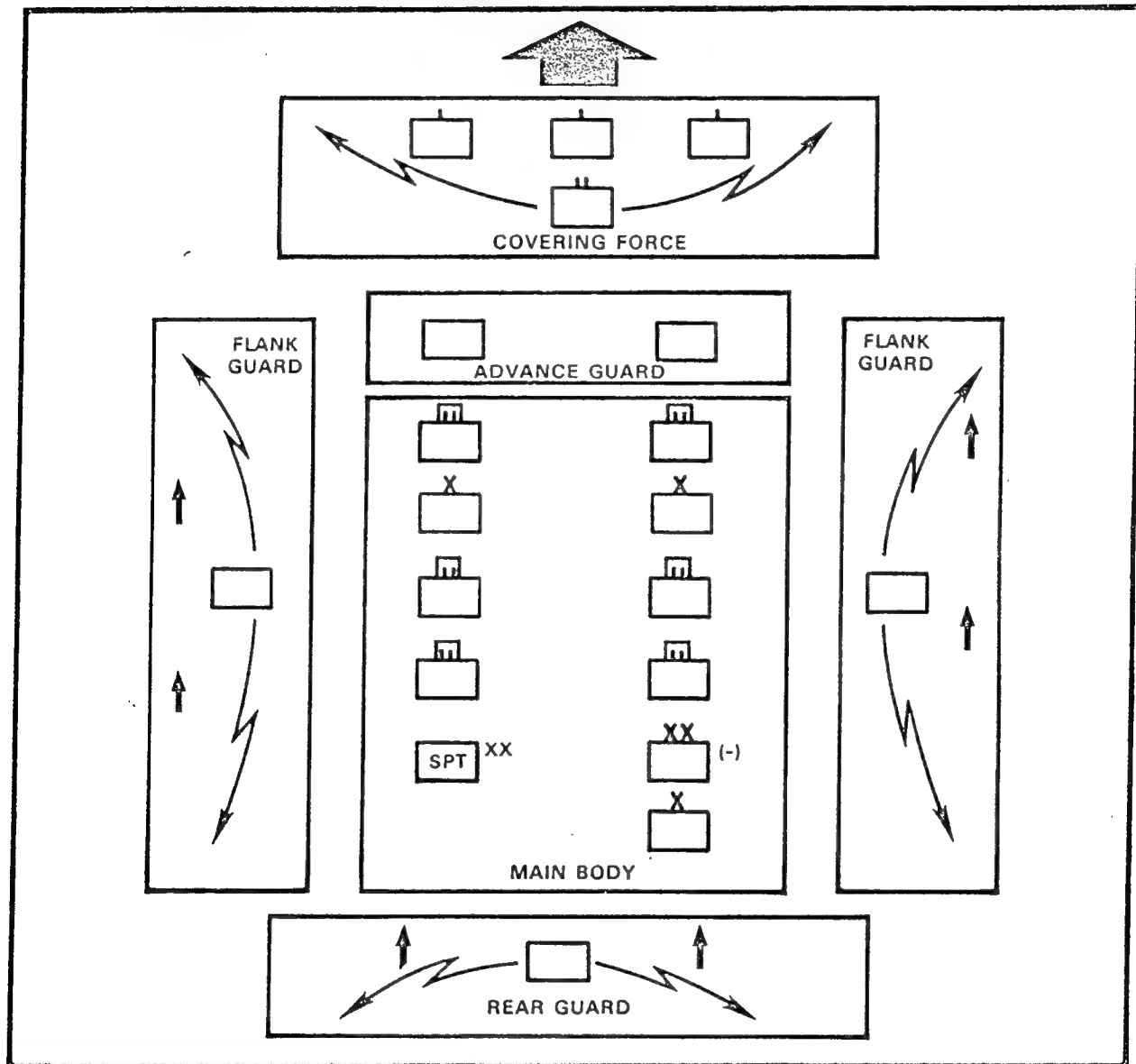


Figure 2 Type organization for division movement to contact



force acts as the medium whereby the deep battle transitions to the close battle.

The armored cavalry regiment (ACR) habitually acts as the covering force for a U.S. corps, the division cavalry squadron for a division. The corps may use a separate brigade or division for a covering force instead of an ACR. Corps may also delegate that divisions constitute their own covering force.²⁶ The covering force must be capable of attacking and destroying enemy reconnaissance elements, securing and holding key terrain, and containing forward enemy units.²⁷

The advanced guard is a security formation which operates as part of the main body. The advanced guard is employed to expedite the movement the main body, to maintain contact with the covering force, and to provide security to the immediate front. Whether in the lead or follow-on in a corps attack, a division will establish an advanced guard²⁸ The main body also provides for all-around security through the employment of flank and rear guards. Their number and size will vary with the

situation. Speed of movement also contributes to security. Forces will move at the highest speeds possible consistent with unit cohesion during movement -- momentum. As with the covering force, corps can control the advanced guard and flank security forces, or it can delegate its control to the divisions. Corps will generally control the rear guard through the deputy corps commander (DCG).²⁹

The main body comprises the preponderance of the unit's combat power: divisions for corps and brigades for divisions. Main bodies are task organized to facilitate an immediate attack or possibly a hasty defense from the march.³⁰ The main body moves dispersed over multiple routes thus deploying combat power forward and enhancing flexibility.³¹ Artillery and air defense units are deployed well forward so as to ensure responsive support. The commitment of the main body to action is generally acknowledged as the end of a movement to contact or meeting engagement.³² At this point the main body either attacks or defends. Commanders avoid committing the main body piecemeal into battle.

The movement to contact is designed primarily to establish contact with a defending enemy. C.J. Dick, a soviet analyst, argues that western military establishments find it difficult to see the options of military operations as anything other than attack or defense.³³ Opposing offensive actions (meeting engagements) are only incident to both offense and defense. It is generally believed that forces of brigade size or larger will rarely be involved as a whole in a meeting engagement.³⁴ Within this western mind set movement to contacts are planned.

In the planning of a movement to contact, the commander focuses on two priorities: intelligence and security.³⁵ The planning and conduct of a movement to contact is highly dependent on the amount of intelligence available on the enemy. The more information that is known and confirmed, the more deliberate the action. The less information that is known, the more cautious the action. The commander and his staff use the intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) process to determine the enemy's likely courses of action and anticipate

engagement areas -- contact with the enemy.

By the same process, the commander and staff determine through a risk assessment the most dangerous enemy courses of action. This assessment drives the force protection (security) priorities of the force. Forces are thus directed to provide advanced and flank guard security. The commander also maneuvers his forces along axes of advance that provide the highest rates of advance, thereby increasing the relative security of the force.

Generally in the conduct of a movement to contact, the covering force moves forward to gain contact and develop the situation through a series of meeting engagements. The covering force orients on terrain objectives, but is not committed to them. They remain force-oriented using terrain for positional advantage -- maneuver. The commander and staff ensure that the integration of their collection, fire support, and air defense forces effectively support the covering force.

The results of the meeting engagements act as a decision point where the commander decides whether to retain the initiative and attack, thereby transitioning out of an offensive movement phase and into an attack phase, or to decline combat and take up the defense.³⁶ The commitment of the main body to the attack or defense ends the movement to contact. A hasty attack generally follows the meeting engagements of a movement to contact. A deliberate attack generally follows an approach march. The intelligence situation of the former is vague, while that of the latter is well-developed.

The U.S. movement to contact acts to transition an offensive movement to an attack or to a defense. The amount of intelligence available on the enemy and the force protection requirements strongly influence the character of the movement to contact. The Soviets, however, recognize the offensive meeting battle as a distinct variant of the offense. The next section will present Soviet meeting battle doctrine.

IV. The Soviet Meeting Battle

This section will review the Soviet approach to the meeting battle: its purpose, organization, planning, and execution. The Soviets wrote prolifically on the meeting battle. The reader will find that their approach was sound and well thought out. The level of detail in which they thought through tactical problems and shared their ideas within their profession set a high standard for militaries world wide. The Soviets championed the meeting battle.

The Soviets recognized the meeting battle as a variant of offensive combat in which both sides strived to complete their mission through offensive action.³⁷ The growth in the proportion of meeting battle and their diversity generated the opinion that meeting battles may be an independent form of combat. Most officers, however, accepted the opinion that the meeting battle was a variant of offense combat.³⁸

The purpose of the meeting battle was to defeat the main forces of the enemy subunits opposing it, annihilating or capturing enemy nuclear weapons and fire resources, and taking a line offering advantageous conditions for the exploitation of the offensive or for the defeat of the approaching enemy reserves.³⁹ To the Soviets, the purpose of all tactical actions was to facilitate operational maneuver -- fight to maneuver.

The Soviets organized for combat in four groups of forces: reconnaissance, forward detachments, advanced guard, and the main body.

To the Soviets winning a reconnaissance advantage through constant and aggressive reconnaissance was one of the most important conditions for success. Early warning was critical to setting the conditions of a meeting battle.⁴⁰ Continuous reconnaissance made it possible for the commander to ensure that the battle took place where he wanted it to, and allowed the commander to adjust his forces to the those of the enemy while he retained the initiative by fighting his plan as he envisioned it.⁴¹

The reader should note that the Soviets did not combine reconnaissance and security operations. They saw them as mutually exclusive operations. Reconnaissance operations did provide early warning -- security, but the primary focus of reconnaissance operations was to facilitate the destruction of the enemy by gaining surprise. Force protection was the responsibility of security forces addressed below.

The forward detachment was a Soviet tactical concept. Its function was combat rather than security or reconnaissance.⁴² Forward detachment's preempted enemy seizure of advantageous positions or key terrain to the front, they assisted the main body to deploy and join battle on favorable terrain, and they maneuvered to strike the enemy main body on his flanks and rear. Forward detachments cushioned the shock of larger forces clashing in a meeting battle and permitted the attacking force with the initiative to both disrupt enemy dispositions and ensure effective commitment of the mass of one's own force. Effective forward detachment operations seized the initiative and imparted momentum to

the offensive.⁴³ Forward detachment operations involved high risks -- decisive engagement was expected.⁴⁴

Organized for speed, the forward detachment was a truly combined arms formation.⁴⁵ A forward detachment in a meeting battle usually consisted of a reinforced tank battalion, a motorized infantry company, an artillery battalion, a combat engineer platoon with river crossing equipment, an air defense battery, reconnaissance, and desant forces (airborne). Forward detachments were regenerated as necessary to facilitate the deployment of the main body.⁴⁶

The forward detachment was one of the tools by which the transition from tactical to operational success was effected. The forward detachment exploited at high speed through the tactical depth of the enemy defense so as to seize an advantageous line to facilitate the rapid maneuver of the parent unit into the operational depth of the enemy defense.⁴⁷

In essence, the actions of the forward detachment in a meeting battle were preemptive -- designed to anticipate and forestall enemy action. In doing so the operation kept the enemy off balance and rendered him incapable of an organized response.⁴⁸

It is important at this point for the reader to distinguish between the forward detachment and the main force advance guard in a meeting battle. The forward detachment was a critical combat element necessary to ensure the momentum of the advance. The advance guard, as a security element, prevented a surprise attack or a penetration of enemy reconnaissance into the main body formation, and also destroyed march security elements.⁴⁹

As stated above, advanced guards were security forces which operated as part of the main body. The advanced guard advanced along the same route as the main body advanced. The advanced guard was employed to expedite the movement of the main body, and to provide security for the immediate front. The main body was also protected through the employment of flank and rear

guards. Their number and size would vary with the situation. Securing the flanks and rear was particularly important in achieving success in a meeting battle.⁵⁰ The Soviet's emphatically stressed the contribution of speed of movement to the enhancement of security and to the obtainment of surprise.

The main body was the decisive combined arms formation which all other formations supported. The main body could be committed to combat simultaneously or successively. The Soviets always sought to commit simultaneously on multiple axes. Their concept was to exploit the effects of a strong initial strike with a single combined arms echelon from which the commander allocated a strong reserve.⁵¹ Narrower frontages and restricted terrain may, however, require two to three echelons in which case the main body deployed successively.

Artillery deployed well forward in the main body formation. It was generally located at the head of the main body with a security force to its front. Prior to the commitment of the main body, massive fire strikes were conducted to disrupt and delay the enemy organized deployment⁵² The Soviets maneuvered to exploit the effects of fire. Air defense forces also deployed well forward to protect the artillery.

The main body maneuvered for advantage by using speed, surprise , and deception (Maskirovka). It attacked rapidly and resolutely to insure that the enemy did not deploy effectively and was not allowed to seize an advantageous line upon which they could consolidate a defense. The main body concealed its maneuver to the enemy flanks and rear.⁵³ The main body attempted to divide the enemy main body, decisively massing on one fragment while fixing other fragments. The enemy was then destroyed piecemeal.⁵⁴

The Soviets planning principles for a meeting battle were continuous reconnaissance, timely decision making and the rapid issuance of orders, rapid task organization, speedy maneuver to seize favorable terrain, preemption of the opening fire, deployment, and attacking; delivering powerful surprise blows to the flanks and rear of the enemy main body. To the Soviets time was the critical element in the planning of the meeting battle. The aim was to get the enemy into a reactive posture, to take the initiative from him. To do this the Soviet planning also stressed surprise and deception.⁵⁵

The Soviets recognized the criticality of deep operations to the close fight. Deep battle using modern weapons made it possible to decisively damage the enemy before units and formations closed with each other in combat.⁵⁶

Preparations for the meeting battle had two stages. In the first stage certain measures were carried out ahead of time in anticipation of a meeting battle: the lines of probable encounter of the enemy were determined (Figure 3), the concept of action at these lines was outlined, the march formation was organized, and logistical requirements determined and prepared for.

During the commander's assessment, he estimated the enemy's force composition, its axis of advance, the probable line of meeting, and the probable time of meeting.⁵⁷ After analyzing intelligence material, the commander formulated his concept, which included the axes of his main offensive, the type and sequence of maneuver to destroy the enemy, organization of fire support, his combat formation, and the projected use of attached forces.⁵⁸

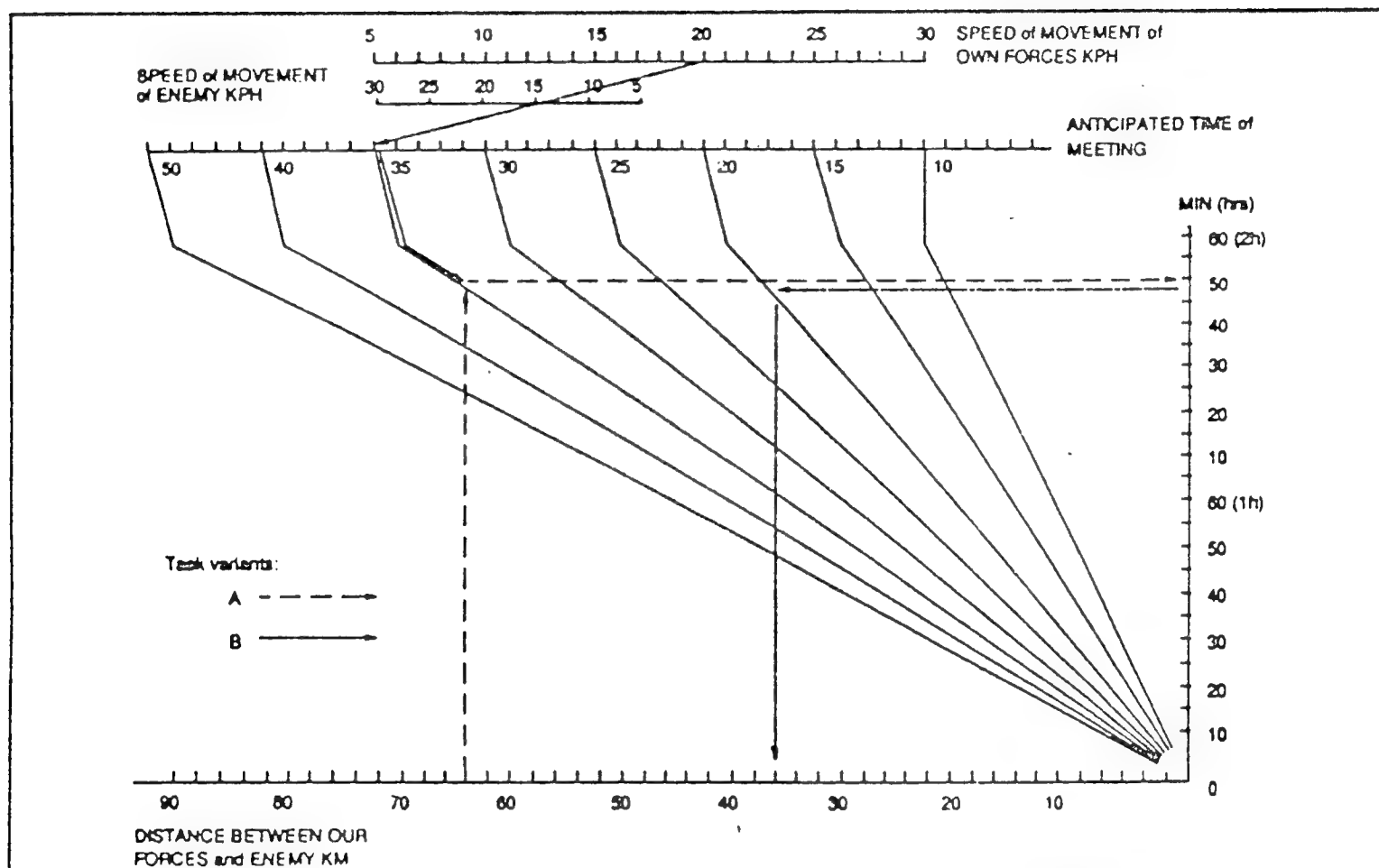


Figure 3 Nomogram to calculate time and distance to point of meeting engagement

The second stage involved refining the concept of operation and the missions of the subunits.⁵⁹ The Soviet commander strove to make a decision prior to contact by the forward elements.⁶⁰ Using this process, the commander and staff had more time during the second stage to focus on the fight as it unfolded, minimizing confusion and enhancing rapid execution.

When time was adequate, the execution of a meeting battle was first developed by reconnaissance forces. Soviet reconnaissance was extensively organized. Besides combat reconnaissance, combat support branches also conducted extensive reconnaissance in order to provide better combat support to the combat forces. For example, engineer reconnaissance elements determined critical points for movement and effective locations for obstacle emplacement.⁶¹

In conjunction with reconnaissance, deep operations were executed with forward detachments, aviation and long range artillery fires, and desant forces. These forces ensured the rapid destruction of troops in the enemy's first echelon by isolating the battlefield from the enemy's approaching reserves.⁶² The forward detachment sought advantageous lines and maneuvered to fix the enemy's main body. It avoided any fight except with the main body.

As the main bodies approached each other, massive fire strikes were conducted to disrupt the enemy's deployment. Combat support detachments deployed to assist and protect the main body's deployment. For instance, engineers organized as movement support detachments (POZ) and mobile obstacle detachments (OOD) to facilitate the movement and enhance the protection respectively of the main body.

The main body simultaneously entered the battle on a broad front using multiple avenues of approach against the enemy's flanks and rear. When the main force approached the enemy, it deployed against the enemy flank the battalion closest to the enemy as a new forward detachment. This detachment pinned down the enemy's main body and protected the deployment of the main force around the enemy's flank.⁶³ When the main forces deployed toward a flank, the flank guard detachment operated as the point element of the advanced guard.⁶⁴ The main body attacking decisively and resolutely fragmented the enemy's main body and destroyed it piece meal. It did not allow the enemy to steal back the initiative. Timely commitment of the reserve prevented this recovery. Reserves were committed early, deep, and against the flanks and rear of the enemy.⁶⁵ It was also very important not to allow the enemy the opportunity to dig in on an advantageous line; such an attempt was thwarted by rapid and decisive attacks on the flanks and, if necessary, front.⁶⁶

If time was inadequate to conduct a meeting battle as described above, the Soviets employed a form of mobile defense by occupying a suitable combat sector, awaiting the enemy attack, disrupting his combat formation and then conducting a combined and prepared attack.⁶⁷

This section reviewed the Soviet approach to the meeting engagement: its purpose, organization, planning, and execution. The Soviets wrote prolifically on the meeting battle. The evolution of the meeting battle was imbedded in the history and evolution of the Soviet army. The next section will analyze the US movement to contact in an offensive meeting battle and use Soviet doctrine to highlight its perceived shortfalls.

V. Analysis

This section focuses on the U.S. movement to contact. This analysis will address six principles that clearly emerge in both the U.S. and Soviet writings: objective, initiative, audacity, tempo, surprise, and maneuver. In addition, the analysis will present other relevant issues: reconnaissance, security, and technology.

FM 100-5, June 1993, states that surprise, concentration, tempo, and audacity characterize offensive operations and are components of initiative.⁶⁸ Success for the Soviets in a meeting battle depended on anticipation, rapid decision making, swift maneuvering to seize an advantageous line, anticipating the enemy in making fire strikes, deploying and going over to the attack, and subjecting the enemy to a strong surprise attack, at the flank and rear as a rule.⁶⁹ Other clearly stated requirements for success are reconnaissance and security.⁷⁰ From these writings, one can deduce several principles applicable to the offensive meeting battle:

objective, initiative, audacity, tempo, surprise, and maneuver.

Objective

U.S. doctrine does not provide a clear offensive objective for the movement to contact. The main purpose of the offense is to defeat, destroy or neutralize the enemy force.⁷¹ Yet, U.S. movement to contact doctrine states its purpose is only to gain contact with the enemy. The decision to attack is contingent to the development of the situation. The U.S. force may decide to defend or to attack.

The Soviets, however, clearly defined their objective for the meeting battle. The purpose of the meeting battle was to defeat the main forces of the enemy subunits opposing it, annihilating or capturing enemy nuclear weapons and fire resources, and taking a line offering advantageous conditions for the exploitation of the offensive or for the defeat of the approaching enemy reserves.⁷²

Initiative

The movement to contact concedes the initiative. Initially, U.S. movement to contact doctrine is a tactical movement, not an offensive action. It postures the force. It does not develop into offensive action until the commitment of the main body. The commitment of the main body depends on the success of the covering force. The covering force fights offensively, but it fights primarily to secure the maneuver of the main body more than to restrict the maneuver of the enemy main body. The Soviet forward detachment's mission was the latter.

An offensive meeting battle is a struggle for the initiative. The initiative is gained and maintained through the offense. The intent of the offense is to gain freedom of action to allow swift transition from one action to another and to put the enemy at risk throughout the depth and space of the battlefield. The attacker presses successful operations relentlessly to prevent the enemy from recovering from the initial shock of the

attack, from regaining his equilibrium, from forming a cohesive defense, or from attacking in turn.⁷³ As stated above, initiative is comprised of audacity, tempo, surprise, and concentration. A look at each component of initiative will demonstrate the indecisive, passive, and reactionary nature of the U.S. movement to contact.

Audacity

Audacity is decisive action in concert with the calculation of risk.⁷⁴ Audacity is the ability to act under conditions of uncertainty. U.S. movement to contact doctrine is overly cautious in search of opportunity. It lacks boldness. It requires that one develop the situation before deciding to attack or to defend. FM 100-5 advises the commander that the covering force should be employed far enough forward of the main body to give the overall commander space and time in which to react to enemy contact.⁷⁵ Unless one is planning on the enemy gaining surprise, this advice is too timid for an offensive operation. When a decision is delayed, critical time is lost. Whoever is responsible for the

meeting engagement cannot afford to squander valuable time. The Soviets saw the meeting battle as a race for time. Time is the most critical resource in war.

Clausewitz warned that if the time arrives when further waiting would bring excessive disadvantages, then the benefit of the negative policy has been exhausted.⁷⁶ During an offensive meeting battle this option is exhausted from the start. "To postpone adopting a plan until the situation is clarified and until new, more complete information on the enemy is obtained, is to be passive and indecisive, and to allow the enemy the possibility of making strikes against one's own grouping and deploying first." writes C. J. Dick, a Soviet analyst.⁷⁷ The Soviets wrote regulations with the weight of law to reduce the danger of indecision during a meeting battle. "Sluggishness, temporizing, and the desire to obtain more complete information about the enemy before making the final decision is entirely impermissible, the RKKA instructions emphasized."⁷⁸ Of course, audacity is reflective of the amount of return expected in relation to the amount of risk accepted. To

fight an offensive meeting battle instead of a defensive meeting battle implies that the benefits will significantly outweigh the risks.

The event of contact with the enemy triggers the sequence of action during a movement to contact. This restricts the plan to reacting to enemy action. The Soviets reacted in this manner only to those contacts that took them by surprise. They normally planned a deliberate assault for their main body against the enemy's main body at a designated time and place based on time distance calculations. Continuous reconnaissance provided them positive control over the enemy and allow them to make adjustments to the enemy's movements. The U.S. decision point based on physical contact with the enemy prior to a decision appears to be an archaic paradigm for this day and age. FM 100-5 reads, "Technologies such as space-based or joint-extended range surveillance and reconnaissance systems help to locate the enemy, but physical contact by friendly troops remains a vital means of finding and fixing the enemy."⁷⁹ Technology is available today that no longer requires a

plan to hinge on the event of physical contact.

Tempo

U.S. movement to contact doctrine is passive. The commander holds the bulk of his force back so that when the lead forces make contact, he can maneuver the majority of their force without becoming decisively engaged.⁸⁰ This allows the enemy to set the tempo. It does not anticipate action. To be successful in a meeting battle, one must not only anticipate but rapidly exploit the effects of acting first. The initial advantage in a hasty attack belongs to the force that first deploys into combat formation and assaults the enemy by fire.⁸¹ The Soviets believed that historically the side that won victory was that which struck the swifter and more powerful initial blow.⁸² The force must move aggressively and with maximum speed. A slow or overly cautious advance will be dangerous because slow moving forces are easy to outflank or to target.⁸³

Tempo is the combination of speed and mass that creates pressure on the enemy. Commanders seek a tempo that maintains relentless pressure on the enemy to prevent him from recovering from the shock and effects of the attack. One should seek to attack all enemy courses of action simultaneously so as to negate his opportunity to gain the initiative. This simultaneity of action has synergistic effects. The ability to continually mass combat power at key times and places, while maintaining the momentum of the attack at a tempo the enemy cannot handle, is essential. While speed is preferred, commanders adjust tempo to ensure synchronization.⁸⁴ The Soviets synchronized their attack with the assault of the enemy main body. The time at which the assault position line is reached is simultaneously the time for the beginning of the attack.⁸⁵ If the timing of the assault is not adjusted, the danger exists that the combat power of a force becomes dispersed; reducing its synergistic effects.

Deep battle is critical to setting the tempo. The purpose of deep battle operations is to deny the enemy freedom of action and to disrupt and destroy the coherence and tempo of his operation.⁸⁶ U.S. deep battle doctrine is very effective, but the passive doctrine of the close fight in a movement to contact fails to exploit its effects. It is essential that close battle operations synchronize with those of the deep battle rather than the deep battle synchronize with the close battle. In a meeting battle, the close fight is brought to the enemy, the enemy is not brought to the close fight.

Surprise

The passivity and delayed decision to commit the main body to the attack does not allow U.S. forces to exploit the effects of surprise. Surprise is fleeting, and must be rapidly exploited. The longer one takes to exploit surprise the greater the chance that the enemy will recover before the effects of surprise can be pressed home. Commanders achieve surprise by striking the enemy at a time or place or in a manner for which it is not

physically or mentally ready. In order to exploit surprise, one must anticipate it. In addition, the enemy may anticipate the attack, but he can still be deceived as to its nature, its timing, and its force. At every level, especially at division and higher, commanders conceal the concentration of their forces until it is too late for the enemy to react effectively.⁸⁷ Commanders must commit their main body early to exploit the effects of surprise in an offensive meeting battle.

Maneuver

In a movement to contact the main body reacts to the success or failure of the covering force. A meeting engagement is a decision point where the commander decides to retain the initiative and attack, thereby transitioning out of an offensive movement phase and into an attack phase, or where he declines combat and takes up the defense.⁸⁸ The result is the successive and piece meal commitment of combat power to the fight. The Soviet sought a simultaneous attack. Successive attacks are only conducted if terrain restricts the employment of one

echelon. Swift maneuver and rapid concentration are required to exploit surprise and the effects of preemptive fires, therefore, disrupting and preventing the effective deployment of the enemy.

Reconnaissance

Continuous reconnaissance is critical for successful decision making during a meeting battle. Continuous reconnaissance allows a commander to adjust his plan to enemy while retaining the initiative. U.S. doctrine confuses the roles of reconnaissance and security. Often the commitment of an ACR brings on decisive engagements resulting in the loss of the reconnaissance picture. U.S. doctrine does not provide guidance concerning collection planning with respect to the competing interests of the deep battle and the close battle. Continuous reconnaissance operations require perseverance. Reconnaissance must be regenerated to counter the effects of attrition. The Soviets habitually tasked subunits for the conduct of reconnaissance missions.

Security

Forward security using advanced guards is adequately addressed by both U.S. and Soviet doctrine. The doctrine for flank and rear security, however, is more obscure. Considering that meeting battles are marked by maneuver to the flanks and rear, one would expect more guidance. One can assume that the threat to the flanks and rear require a force capable of sustained engagement. Battalions have this capability. Companies and platoons do not. Strong flank guards secure flexible maneuver options by securing parallel avenues of advance. The use of speed of movement to enhance security is emphasized in US doctrine, but the exploitation of terrain for security is not. River lines, for example, provide security to movement on the flanks. Control of the far side permits a commander greater flexibility to change the direction of maneuver and prevents the enemy securing crossing sites for countermaneuver. Current doctrine emphasizes "phalanx" type formation such as the "desert wedge". Formations provide only passive security. They facilitate movement more than security. Security forces

require time and space to adequately protect friendly forces.

Technology

Current technologies are not incorporated into movement to contact doctrine. During Desert Storm, the Joint Attack Target Radar Surveillance (JSTARS) system directly supported the movement to contact of the 2d ACR against the Republican Guard providing the ACR a decisive advantage and valuable time to anticipate and synchronize its fight.⁸⁹ Current doctrine does not fully address the use of helicopters in the meeting battle. Armed helicopters used in reconnaissance or as an advance guard can by virtue of their freedom of movement from terrestrial restrictions effectively conceal the approach of the main body. Ground forces telegraph the direction of advance. Exploiting the application of technology requires innovative audacity on the part of commanders.

Having identified the weaknesses of U.S. movement to contact, the following section will present recommendations to better adapt the doctrine to an offensive meeting battle.

VI. Recommendation

1. Adopt the concepts and definitions of offensive and defensive meeting battles presented in Section Two.
2. Reevaluate the requirement for physical contact to validate decision points. The decision to fight an offensive or defensive meeting battle must take place before closing with the enemy.
3. In an offensive meeting battle, the commander should decisively commit the main body against the enemy before closure with the enemy is effected.
4. In an offensive meeting battle, maneuver the covering force fix the enemy main body and isolate it from reinforcement. The covering force should avoid unnecessary contact with enemy security forces.
5. In a corps meeting battle, a division should be the primary covering force, augmented by an ACR. Divisions

should place this mission on their mission essential task list (METL).

6. The main body is the base unit for maneuver. The covering force, security forces, and advanced guards should adjust their actions to the main body in order to achieve simultaneity of action and synergistic effect on the enemy.

7. Flank and rear guard missions should be assigned to and conducted by battalions on separate axes from the main body.

8. The army should investigate the employment of the attack helicopter battalion in the roles of the covering force and advanced guard.

VII. Conclusion

Current U.S. movement to contact doctrine is unsound for the planning and conduct of an offensive meeting battle. As a combat operation defined by an intense struggle for the initiative, the current doctrine is found to be indecisive, passive, and reactionary. It loses the fight from the start.

In addition, the doctrine fails to recognize the distinction between an offensive meeting battle and a defensive meeting battle. U.S. doctrine is confusing concerning the conduct of reconnaissance and security. The application of current technologies are not incorporated into the doctrine. Old paradigms continue to persist.

Despite the fall of the Soviet Union, the Soviet concept of the meeting battle still provides relevant and keen insights into the nature and dynamics of the offensive meeting battle. On this type of combat operation their writings were prolific. The meeting

battle evolved directly from their study of operational art characterized by the extended battlefield in depth and their initiatives to solve the complex problems of modern warfare.

Today with the demassification of armed forces whether as a result of economic conditions or the exploitation of technology, military policy is requiring that a belligerents offensive capability be neutralized without protracted war.⁹⁰ Whereas the doctrine of the Cold War evolved to the doctrine of the offensive-defense, conditions today require the evolution of doctrine towards the defensive-offense. The offensive meeting battle is a means to this end.

ENDNOTES

1. V. G. Reznichenko, Taktika [Tactics]. (1987), p. 117. "The meeting engagement is a variant of the offensive battle in which both sides attempt to fulfill their assigned missions by means of the offense."
2. Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary. (Springfield: G&C Merriam Company, 1965), p. 273.
3. Standardization North Atlantic Treaty Organization Agreement 2868, Land Forces Tactical Doctrine. (NATO Military Agency for Standardization, 12 September 1993), p. 6-1.
4. U.S. Army Field Manual 100-5, Operations. (Washington D.C. : U.S. Government Printing Office, 14 June 1993), p. 6-3; U.S. Army Field Manual 100-2-1, Soviet Army Operations and Tactics. (Washington D.C. : U.S. Government Printing Office, 18 June 1990), p. 3-42. Under Soviet doctrine, the meeting engagement -- vstrechnoye srazheniye -- is fought by operational formations such as an army, whereas tactical formations, division and below, fight meeting battles - Vstrechnyy boy.
5. FM 100-5 (1993), p. 7-4.
6. Webster Dictionary, p. 179.
7. L. Korzun, "Meeting Engagement Tactics: Postwar Developments Discussed." Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal [Military History Journal], No 1 (January 1982). Translated and reprinted in Reference Book 20-19, Selected Readings in Military History: Soviet Military History: Volume II, The Soviet Army Since 1945. (Fort Leavenworth: Command and General Staff College, January 1984, p.267; Reznichenko, p. 118. Counterstrikes are fire strikes; counterthrusts are combat actions involving maneuver forces.

8. The Voroshilov Lectures. Edited by Graham H. Turbiville, Jr., Volume III (Washington D.C.: National Defense University, 1992) p. 112. Counterstrikes require an abundance of forces; Reznichenko, p. 118.
9. Charles J. Dick, "The Meeting Battle," Department of Defense Publication Red Thrust Star, April 1990, p. 5.
10. General Moshe Peled during a lecture at the National Training Center in 1988 discussed the situation he faced as a division commander during the Yom Kippur War and the considerations which lead him to make the decision to attack.
11. Dick, p. 5.
12. Boyd D. Gaines, "Time-Space Relationships: The Forward Observer and the Movement to Contact," Field Artillery Journal, October 1992, p. 28.
13. FM 100-5 (1993), p. 2-5.
14. Dick, p. 5.
15. Reznichenko, p. 118-119.
16. The NATO term "Advance to Contact" is synonymous with movement to contact.
17. STANAG 2868, p. 6-1.
18. FM 100-5 (1993), p. 7-4.
19. U.S. Army Field Manual 71-100, Division Operations. (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 16 June 1990), p. 4-24.
20. STANAG 2868, p. 6-1.
21. STANAG 2868, p. 6-1.
22. FM 100-5 (1993), p. 7-4.

23. U.S. Army Field Manual 101-5-1, Operational Terms and Symbols. (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 21 October 1985), p. 1-64.
24. U.S. Army Field Manual 100-5, Operations. (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 5 May 1986), p. 113.
25. FM 71-100, p. 4-26.
26. U.S. Army Field Manual 100-15, Corps Operations. (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 13 September 1989), p. 5-1.
27. STANAG 2868, p. 6-1
28. FM 71-100, p. 4-24.
29. FM 100-15, p. 5-1.
30. FM 100-15, p. 5-2.
31. STANAG 2868, p. 6-3.
32. STANAG 2868, p. 6-1; FM 71-100, p. 4-26
33. Dick, p. 5.
34. STANAG 2868, p. 6-3.
35. FM 100-15, p. 5-1.
36. FM 71-100, p. 4-26.
37. Korzun, p. 266.
38. Korzun, p. 269.
39. Korzun, p. 269.
40. Reznichenko, p. 120.
41. David Ozolek, "Winning the Meeting Engagement," Armor, January-February 1987, p. 13.

42. James F. Holcomb, "Soviet Forward Detachments," International Defense Review, May 1989, p. 553.
43. David M. Glantz, The Soviet Conduct of Tactical Maneuver: Spearhead of the Offensive. (London: Frank Cass Co. & Ltd., 1991), pp. 53 and 60.
44. Holcomb, p. 553.
45. John R. Landry, "Countering the Soviet Forward Detachment," Military Review, June 1987, p. 18; Holcomb, p. 551.
46. Glantz, pp. 54-55; Holcomb, p. 551.
47. Holcomb, p. 551 and 553.
48. Glantz, p. 58.
49. Glantz, p. 54.
50. Reznichenko, p. 122.
51. Red Armor Combat Orders. Edited by Richard N. Armstrong, (London: Frank Cass Co. & Ltd., 1991), p. 71; Reznichenko, p. 123-124.
52. Reznichenko, p. 122.
53. Mikhail Silukov, "To Forestall the Enemy: The Meeting Engagement," Soviet Military Review, December 1989, p. 19.
54. Voroshilov, p. 116.
55. Dick, pp. 5-7 and 9.
56. Reznichenko, pp. 120 and 128.
57. Dick, p. 7.
58. Glantz, p. 54.
59. Reznichenko, p. 124.

60. Korzun, p. 270.
61. Reznichenko, p. 127.
62. Reznichenko, p. 132.
63. Glantz, p. 54.
64. Reznichenko, p. 130.
65. Reznichenko, p. 132.
66. Reznichenko, p. 132.
67. Red Armor, p. 72.
68. FM 100-5 (1993), p. 7-1.
69. Reznichenko, p. 121.
70. FM 100-5 (1993), p. 6-19.
71. FM 100-5 (1993), p. 7-0.
72. Korzun, p. 269.
73. FM 100-5 (1993), p. 7-0.
74. FM 100-5 (1993), p. Glossary-0.
75. FM 100-5 (1986), p. 113.
76. Carl von Clausewitz, On War, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 99.
77. Dick, p. 6.
78. A. Zheltoukov, "The Meeting Engagement," Voyenny Vestnik [Military Herald], 1984, p. 26. Translated by the U.S. Army Foreign Science and Technology Center.
79. FM 100-5 (1993), p. 7-4.
80. FM 100-5 (1993), p. 7-4.

81. FM 71-100, p. 4-26.
82. Zheltoukov, p. 26.
83. FM 100-5 (1986), p. 112.
84. FM 100-5 (1993), pp. 7-3 and 8-5.
85. Reznichenko, p. 124.
86. FM 100-5 (1993), p. 7-13.
87. FM 100-5 (1993), p. 7-1 and 7-2. An example of such a deception is what one could term the "tsunami effect". During the Cold War, the Soviets were expected to enter a battle in successive echelons giving U.S. commanders the opportunity to destroy each echelon piecemeal through a combination of deep and close battle. This expectation, however, is fallacious if the enemy instead of successively deploying its echelons at a constant rate, accelerated the movement of the second echelon by slowing down the first before it entered decisive combat. This would result in a rapid concentration of combat power with both echelons arriving within mutual support of each other, thus disrupting the tempo of the defense. The effects of a tsunami are identical to this process. When the front of the wave hits shallow water it slows down while the rear of the wave continues at a higher speed. This results in a rapid concentration of water -- tsunami.
88. FM 71-100, p. 4-26.
89. Robert H. Scales, Certain Victory: The U.S. Army in the Gulf War, (Fort Leavenworth: CGSC Press, 1994), p. 237.
90. Alvin and Heidi Toffler, War and Anti-war, (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1993), p. 59.

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